



**An Interim Report of the Evaluation
of a Comprehensive High School Civic
Engagement Intervention in Hudson, MA**

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The Civic Mission of Schools (Carnegie Corporation of New York & Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2003) points to a continuing decline in civic knowledge and participation among young people. It calls on educators and policymakers to correct this trend through a variety of education-based interventions. The report suggests the potential value of several specific strategies. One is to “give students opportunities to contribute opinions about the governance of the school – not just through student governments, but in forums that engage the entire student body or in smaller groups addressing significant problems in the school” (p. 21). Although some research supports this idea (Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1989), there is a general lack of evidence about the impact of engaging the entire student body in democratic deliberation.

Changes in the structure and governance of Hudson High School, in Hudson, MA, provide an opportunity to study this type of intervention on students’ civic attitudes, skills, knowledge, and behaviors. Hudson is an industry-based town where about one third of the population is of Portuguese/Brazilian decent (Berman, 2004). The high school serves about 1,000 socially and economically diverse students. Since 1993 the school has worked to strengthen academic performance by, for example, extending the school day, shifting to a semester-based block schedule, and creating new learning opportunities through programs such as school-to-career and the Virtual High School, which offers online courses from other high schools in the nation.

Hudson High School has also restructured its curriculum, organization, and teaching practices to foster the development an ethic of civic service and responsibility, as well as abilities that will allow informed participation in the community (Berman, 2004). This effort includes a core ninth-grade civics course and the integration of service-learning across the curriculum. The year-long civics course combines English and social studies and uses the Holocaust to illustrate what can happen with a passive citizenry. The course is designed to develop in students a greater sense of moral responsibility

and a greater commitment to making a difference in their community. Service-learning has been integrated into the civics course as a way to help students expand their “universe of obligation” by undertaking a service-learning project. Service-learning has also been incorporated into other courses including chemistry, physics, drama, and physical education. The goal is to give students the experience of productive work on community needs and to teach them that they can make a difference in the world.

In September 2003, the school launched two new civic development efforts – clustering and schoolwide governance – and moved into a new building designed to facilitate them (Berman, 2004). Clustering is designed to achieve a sense of community within a large school by creating small communities of 100 to 150 students. To create common bonds that tie each group together, clusters at the grade 10-12 level are organized around four areas of student interest: communications, media, and the arts; science, health, recreation, and the environment; business, engineering, and technology; and public policy, education, and service.

Clusters meet for one hour each week to discuss school and cluster issues. The new school building was designed with space to facilitate such meetings, reflecting the idea that democratic deliberation requires “public space” where people can gather and engage with each other (Boyte & Kari, 1996). Cluster meetings also offer opportunities for presentations on the cluster theme, such as current issues and career opportunities (Berman, 2004). In addition, members of each cluster work together on service-learning projects related to the cluster theme. Students in the public policy, education, and service cluster, for example, raised funds for the community food pantry.

Clusters also form the basic unit of Hudson High’s schoolwide governance model, which was derived from the idea of “just communities” within high schools (Power et al., 1989). The belief underpinning schoolwide governance is that students will become more civic minded and engaged if they experience democratic deliberation

as part of their school experience (Berman, 2004). In their cluster meetings, students have discussed and voted on governance issues such as the dress code, attendance policy, parking guidelines, and the food service program. Recommendations passed by the clusters are sent for a vote at the monthly meeting of a "community council" made up of student, faculty, administration, and community representatives. Recommendations approved by the council are sent to the principal, who can accept or veto them. Vetoed recommendations can be sent for resolution to a "board of conciliation," which includes the superintendent, a school board member, and a council representative.

METHOD

In 2003 we began a five-year data collection to assess the progress of the clustering and schoolwide governance intervention (Table 1). The current report describes the implementation of the intervention and presents preliminary findings on the civic development of twelfth graders since the programs were launched. The findings are based on information from four annual twelfth-grade surveys in 2003-2006 and twelfth-grade focus groups conducted in 2006.

QUESTIONNAIRE

The student questionnaire was developed in part using items from the Monitoring the Future and the National Household Education Survey questionnaires (Johnston, Bachman, O'Malley, & Schulenberg, 2003; Nolin et al., 2000). Some items measure political and community behavior (e.g., intention to vote, participation in community service). Some test political knowledge (Whose responsibility is it to determine if a law is constitutional?), civic skill (e.g., discussing politics or national news with parents), and political interest (e.g., reading about national issues in the newspaper). Other items probe political and social tolerance (e.g., Should some books be banned from public libraries? How would you feel about having neighbors of another race?).

EVALUATION MODEL

For the current report, student questionnaire items were selected to fit an evaluation model largely derived from the work of Gibson (2001) and the civic voluntarism model developed by Verba, Scholzman, and Brady (1995). Gibson's 2001 review article on youth civic engagement suggests

Table 1
Hudson High School evaluation project

Component	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Student questionnaire					
Class of '03	X				
Class of '04		X			
Class of '05			X		
Class of '06	X	X	X	X	
Class of '07		X	X	X	X
Senior focus groups		X	X	X	X
Student interviews		X	X	X	X
Faculty questionnaire		X	X	X	X
Faculty interviews					X
Community interviews	X				X
Collection of voting data		X	X	X	X
Second-year-alumni questionnaire	X	X	X	X	X

that the desired long-term outcome of civic education is the development of adults who are involved in political and community issues and who have a sense of community. Verba et al.'s (1995) civic voluntarism model proposes that certain "participatory factors" such as political knowledge, civic skills, and political interest predispose individuals to become politically involved. We included in our evaluation model several such participatory factors that might influence civic engagement and that could be enhanced through school participation. Overall, our evaluation model includes 19 measures that cover civic behaviors, knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The development of these measures is described in the appendix.

SAMPLE

In the four surveys conducted during 2003-2006, 598 (88%) of the 682 registered twelfth-graders completed questionnaires (Table 2). The resulting sample has a higher proportion of females (56%) than males. European Americans (excluding Portuguese/Brazilians and Hispanics) are the largest ethnic group (70%), with Portuguese/Brazilian youth constituting the largest ethnic minority (20%) in the school. The highest levels of education achieved by the mothers of the students are presented as a measure of socioeconomic status. These figures indicate that about half (51%) of the mothers had a high school education, 38% a college education, and 11% less than a high school

Table 2
Characteristics of responding twelfth graders, 2003-2006

	2003		2004		2005		2006		All	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Number in class	184		176		154		168		682	
Number of responses	168	91.3	135	76.7	136	88.3	159	94.6	598	87.7
Gender										
Male	70	41.7	61	45.2	60	44.1	74	47.1	265	44.5
Female	98	58.3	74	54.8	76	55.9	83	52.9	331	55.5
<i>N</i>	168		135		136		157		596	
Ethnicity										
African American	2	1.2	2	1.5	2	1.5	6	3.8	12	2.0
Brazilian	12	7.1	6	4.4	7	5.2	10	6.3	35	5.9
Latino/Hispanic	5	3.0	5	3.7	7	5.2	11	6.9	28	4.7
Portuguese	22	13.1	25	18.5	18	13.3	22	13.8	87	14.6
Other European American	122	72.6	92	68.1	96	71.1	105	66.0	415	69.5
Other ethnicity	5	3.0	5	3.7	5	3.7	5	3.1	20	3.4
<i>N</i>	168		135		135		159		597	
Mother's education										
Grade school	4	2.5	9	7.3	4	3.3	7	4.9	24	4.4
Some high school	13	8.2	6	4.8	7	5.8	12	8.3	38	6.9
High school graduate	44	27.8	32	25.8	35	28.9	36	25.0	147	26.9
Some college	40	25.3	30	24.2	26	21.5	34	23.6	130	23.8
College graduate	47	29.7	38	30.6	40	33.1	40	27.8	165	30.2
Graduate school	10	6.3	9	7.3	9	7.4	15	10.4	43	7.9
<i>N</i>	158		124		121		144		547	

education.

ANALYSES

The results presented here are from all students who completed a twelfth-grade survey. Occasionally students skipped items or sabotaged their responses by writing numbers outside the range of values asked for (e.g., writing "6" when the item asked for values ranging from 1 to 4). The number of missing or sabotaged responses ranged from 0 to 15, depending on the item and the survey year. If responses were missing or sabotaged, we imputed values when possible. As a check on this procedure, we reran the basic analyses using a restricted sample that excludes cases with missing or sabotaged responses. All significant results found with the full sample were also found with the restricted sample.

RESULTS

The first analysis explores how well the cluster/governance programs were implemented. These qualitative findings are drawn largely from five focus group interviews with 38 twelfth graders in 2006 (23% of the class). The class of 2006 represents the first at Hudson High School to go through all three years of the intervention. The second analysis evaluates the impact of the efforts on civic development in the twelfth grade. These quantitative findings are based on questionnaire data collected from the 2003-2006 senior classes.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CLUSTER/ GOVERNANCE PROGRAMS

Two purposes of the clustering and schoolwide governance programs are to provide students with opportunities for democratic deliberation and community service. To some extent, the intervention achieved these goals. Students discussed and, in some instances, acted on a range of school issues including student parking privileges, cafeteria fare, school dress code, the amount of time between classes, and a much-debated proposal to enact a measure of student accountability for time spent in cluster meetings (see below). For students who were more involved in these issues, the experience was

beneficial in terms of learning to express ideas and discuss issues.

In addition, clusters "pumped out community service projects in a good way," said a focus group participant. Indeed, the numbers of students performing community service rose significantly over the four years (see below). Whereas service-learning was required of all students as part of the ninth-grade civics course, community service in clusters was voluntary, and many students reported that they enjoyed doing it. Some twelfth graders said that with the press of applying to college and other responsibilities, they wouldn't otherwise have the time to get involved in community service. "I think if I didn't have clustering, I wouldn't do as much community service as I do now," explained one student. "I got to go during a school day to do Habitat for Humanity. That's pretty ... cool."

During the first two years of implementation, however, the cluster/governance intervention encountered some confusion among students and teachers about how it was to operate, as well as resentment by some students, particularly in the twelfth grade, about having to participate in cluster activities. By its third year, the intervention was better organized, as a twelfth grader explained:

"Over the past three years I think that the like problems we've had with clustering like really worked out. Like we've been able to be here for the past three years and fool around with it to see what works and what doesn't. And I think it's finally starting to come together and also be productive."

In spite of improvements over its first three years that have made the intervention more productive, students in the focus groups suggested that the programs are not yet mature and that clustering and governance will continue to evolve in the future. "The whole clustering/governance thing, it's a very new program, but I think it has a lot of potential to do some really good stuff," said one student. Added another, "We all see that there are definite ways that we need to improve the system, and I think that will happen."

Implementation has raised several issues

that have already resulted in formal or informal changes to the programs. The issues include difficulty conducting clusterwide meetings, low participation by some students, and the limits of student democracy.

Clusterwide meetings. The original intent was to conduct cluster meetings with all members participating in the fashion of a New England town meeting. This approach proved impractical. As a result, smaller "interest groups" were instituted within each cluster. They were organized around professional interests related to the cluster theme, and many had community service as a goal. An alternative fuels interest group, for example, got funding to buy a diesel-powered car, which the group plans to have converted to use biodiesel fuel (e.g., waste vegetable oil from restaurants). A wellness interest group has undertaken bike rides to raise money for charities. A leadership interest group has taken on the responsibility of organizing cluster activities and training younger students to assume leadership roles.

Students found it easier to discuss school governance issues in interest groups than in clusterwide meetings. A twelfth grader explained the change by noting that students "didn't feel comfortable around 150 kids expressing their opinion. ... So usually when we have to talk about governance or anything like that, we meet in a small group. That way they can express their opinions OK." Clusters now tend to meet as a whole only for a specific need, such as a schoolwide vote, an informational presentation from cluster representatives on the community council, or cluster-related business such as exchanging information about the accomplishments of the interest groups within the cluster.

Low participation. A number of students at any given time did not participate with much enthusiasm in cluster activities. They did little constructive work, played computer games, or used cluster activities as social occasions. "I'm pretty lazy," explained one student. "I really don't care about, like, governance or anything like that. ... I want to go to school, do a sport or whatever, and go home."

Although the design of the cluster/

governance programs proposed that students would receive no grade for cluster time, the school district decided in 2005-2006 to establish an "accountability requirement" as a means of addressing the problem of low-participation students, the focus groups said. Now at the end of the school year, students will be required to write a reflection about what they have accomplished in their interest group and how they have supported their cluster. Interest groups are to verify whether members have participated or not, and each cluster is to verify the participation of its interest groups. A student's participation or lack of participation in the cluster for the year will be noted on his or her transcript, but the entry will not affect the student's grade point average. "It's basically like pass/fail," a twelfth grader explained. "And there are no credits attached."

Domain of student democracy. The enactment of the accountability requirement raised questions about the domain of student democracy at Hudson High School, the focus groups said. When asked to vote on whether to have an accountability requirement, students voted overwhelmingly against it. The school committee (district school board) rejected that decision but gave students the choice of devising their own accountability plan or accepting one written by the school committee. Students ultimately created and approved their own plan, which the school committee accepted. The experience left many students wondering how much power they really have to influence the more important governance decisions at the high school.

Some students in the focus groups said they had become disillusioned about democratic governance at the high school as a result of their experience with the accountability plan. Others, however, viewed it as a valuable lesson on the give-and-take of real-life democracy. Said one student who helped develop the accountability plan:

Between everything we did with community council and trying to make sure everything was OK with the teacher's union – and it was so much more than I ever thought actual students could be doing in creating a plan in which actually students ended up

grading other students – to avoid all these legal issues and everything like that, with creating extra work for the teachers. But it was kind of a radically different plan. It was like democracy in action. It's something you can't really learn in a classroom.

CIVIC DEVELOPMENT OF TWELFTH GRADERS

To get a preliminary idea about the possible impact of the intervention on the civic development of twelfth graders, we analyzed data from the 19 measures in our evaluation model. Table 3 presents results for the 19 measures. Significant findings

are summarized by gender in Table 4 and between genders in Table 5 (see page 8). Overall, significant differences between twelfth graders in 2003 and 2006 were found on six measures: political knowledge, community service, contributing money, community concern, external political efficacy, and confidence in ability to write to public officials.

Political knowledge. Of all the measures in the evaluation model, political knowledge showed the strongest and broadest increases from 2003 (the last year prior to the cluster/governance intervention) to 2006 (the third year of the

Table 3
Civic outcomes among 12th graders

	2003		2006		Difference (%)
	#	%	#	%	
Voted or plan to vote in a public election	131	78.0	124	78.0	0.0
Wrote or probably will write to public officials	51	30.4	40	25.2	-17.1
Gave or probably will give money to a political candidate or cause	21	12.5	42	26.4	111.3 * *
Worked or probably will work in a political campaign	13	7.7	18	11.3	46.3
Participated or probably will participate in a lawful demonstration	40	23.8	49	30.8	29.4
Boycotted or probably will boycott certain products or stores	45	26.8	47	29.6	10.4
Participated in any community service (voluntary/required) during past year	70	41.7	91	57.2	37.4 * *
Could make a comment or statement at a public meeting	142	84.5	126	79.2	-6.2
Could write a letter to a government official about an issue of concern	128	76.2	100	62.9	-17.5 * *
Could call someone I have never met to explain a problem and ask for help	111	66.1	109	68.6	3.8
Often discuss politics or the national news with my parents or family	65	38.7	67	42.1	8.9
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	
Political knowledge (scale of 0-5 points)	1.99	1.65	2.79	1.78	39.7 * * *
Political tolerance (scale of 1-3 points)	2.69	0.57	2.60	0.62	-3.2
Social tolerance (scale of 3-12 points)	9.74	1.72	9.60	1.99	-1.4
Community concern (scale of 3-12 points)	6.44	2.01	7.10	2.33	10.3 * *
Political interest (scale of 0-6 points)	2.90	1.82	2.91	1.85	0.0
Internal political efficacy (scale of 1-5 points)	2.93	1.21	3.03	1.25	3.3
External political efficacy (scale of 2-10 points)	7.23	1.69	6.81	2.12	-5.8 *
Active citizenship (scale of 2-10 points)	7.80	1.64	8.08	1.73	3.6
<i>N</i>	168		159		

Note. *M* = mean, *SD* = standard deviation. Pearson's chi-square statistic was used to compare frequencies. The *t*-test for independent samples was used to compare means.

* = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$.

Table 4
Gender differences in civic measures among twelfth graders between 2003 (T1) and 2006 (T4)

Measure	All			Males			Females		
	T1	T4	T4-T1	T1	T4	T4-T1	T1	T4	T4-T1
Participated in any community service (%)	41.7	57.2	15.6 **	30.0	51.4	21.4 **	50.0	63.9	13.9
Gave or plan to give money to a political candidate or cause (%)	12.5	26.4	13.9 **	5.7	17.6	11.9 *	17.3	33.7	16.4 *
Political knowledge (0-5 scale)	1.99	2.79	0.79 ***	2.10	2.89	0.79 **	1.92	2.70	0.78 **
Could write a letter to a government official about a concern (%)	76.2	62.9	-13.3 **	81.4	59.5	-22.0 **	72.4	65.1	-7.4
Community concern (3-12 scale)	6.44	7.10	0.66 **	6.59	6.78	0.20	6.34	7.36	1.02 **
External political efficacy (2-10 scale)	7.23	6.81	-0.42 *	7.00	6.38	-0.62	7.39	7.17	-0.22
<i>N</i>	168	159		70	74		98	83	

Note. Only measures with significant results ($p < .05$) are presented.

* = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$.

Table 5
Gender differences in civic measures among all twelfth graders in combined classes of 2003-2006

Measure	Males	Females	Difference (M - F)
Participated in any community service (%)	47.2	57.7	-10.5 *
Gave or plan to give money to a political candidate or cause (%)	12.8	19.6	-6.8 *
Political knowledge (0-5 scale)	2.60	2.20	0.40 **
Political tolerance (1-3 scale)	2.52	2.65	-0.13 *
Social tolerance (3-12 scale)	9.01	9.96	-0.95 ***
Active citizenship (2-10 scale)	7.64	7.93	-0.29 *
External political efficacy (2-10 scale)	6.62	7.20	-0.58 ***
<i>N</i>	265	331	

Note. Only significant results ($p < .05$) are presented.

* = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$.

intervention). The level of political knowledge among twelfth graders rose from an average of 2.0 correct answers (out of 5) in 2003 to 2.8 correct in 2006 (Figure 1). Overall, males scored higher than females, but average political knowledge scores increased significantly for both

genders over the four years.

Community service. Measures of community service also increased significantly. In 2006, 57% of twelfth graders reported doing some kind of community service, compared with 42% in 2003 (Figure 2-- see page 10). Although community

Figure 1. Political knowledge among twelfth graders.

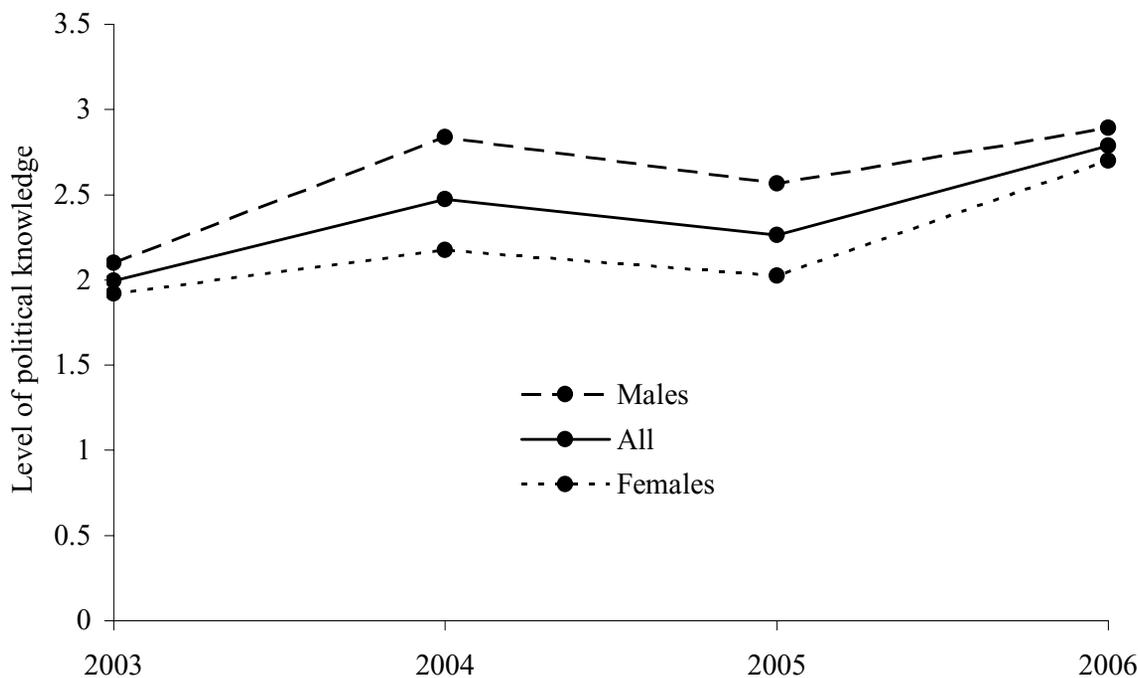
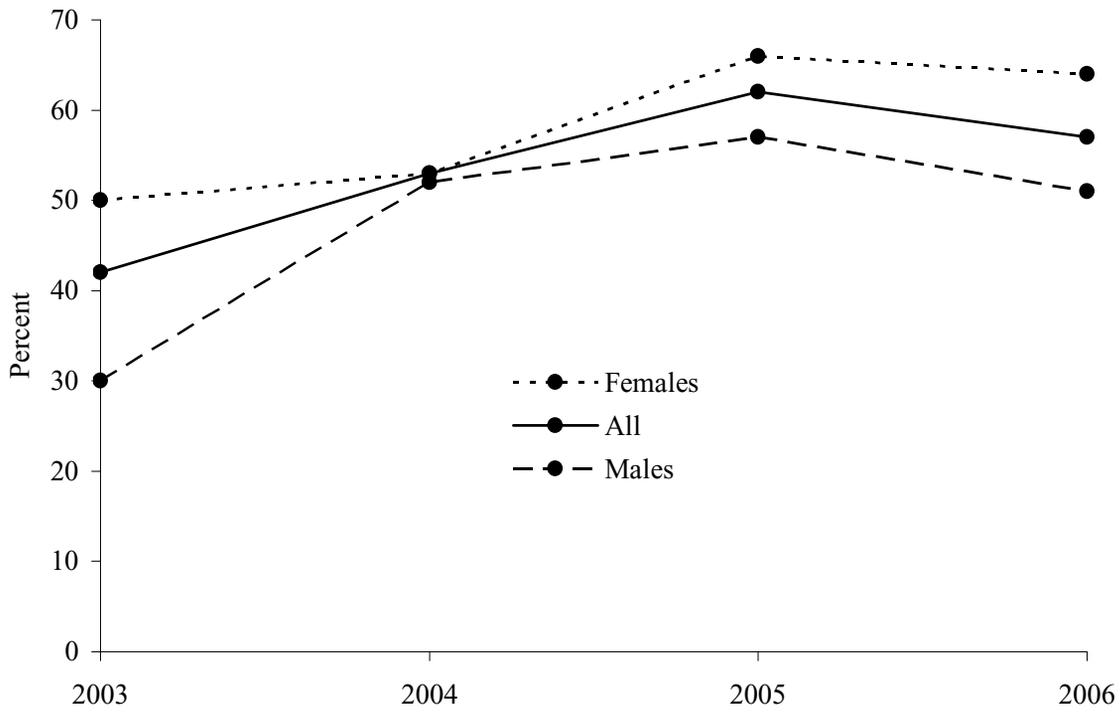


Figure 2. Community service among twelfth graders.



service rose among both genders from 2003 to 2006, the increase was significant only for males.

Contributing money. The proportion of twelfth graders who have given or probably will give money to a political candidate or cause doubled over the four years of the study, rising from 13% in 2003 to 26% in 2006 (Figure 3).

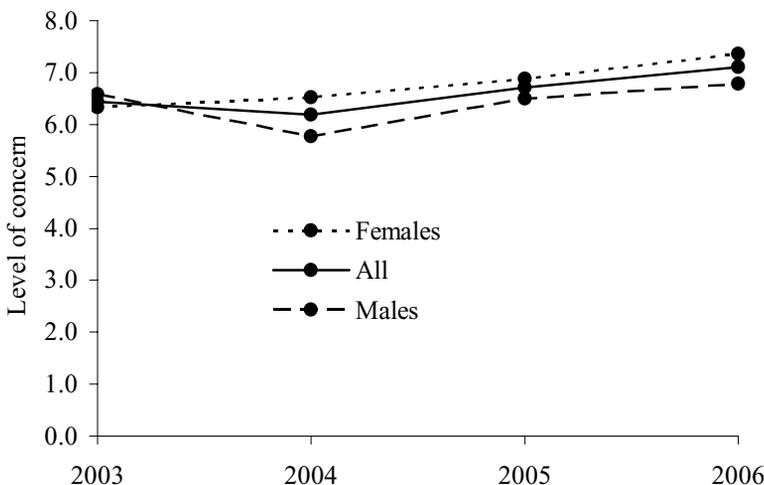
Overall, higher proportions of females than males contributed.

Community concern. Community concern among twelfth graders rose from a level of 6.4 (on a scale of 3-12 points) in 2003 to 7.1 in 2006 (Figure 4). Among females, the increase was especially large, rising from 6.3 to 7.4 over the four years.

Figure 3. Proportion of twelfth graders who have given or probably will give money to a political candidate or cause.



Figure 4. Community concern among twelfth graders.



External political efficacy. External political efficacy – the belief that government is responsive to citizens – declined from 7.2 in 2003 to 6.8 in 2006 (Figure 5). However, this difference was relatively

small and was not statistically significant when evaluated in smaller groups of males and females.

Confidence in ability to write to public officials. The proportion of twelfth graders who said they felt

Figure 5. External political efficacy among twelfth graders.

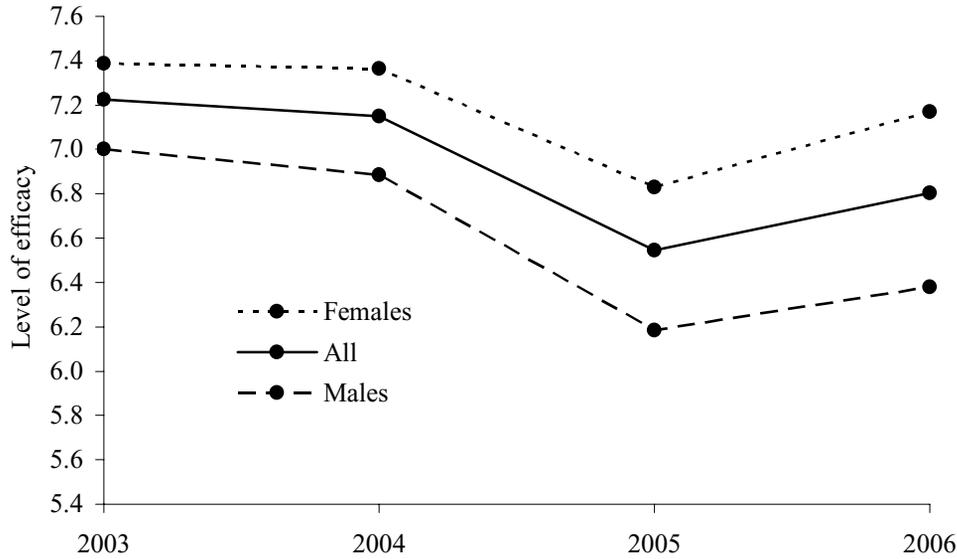
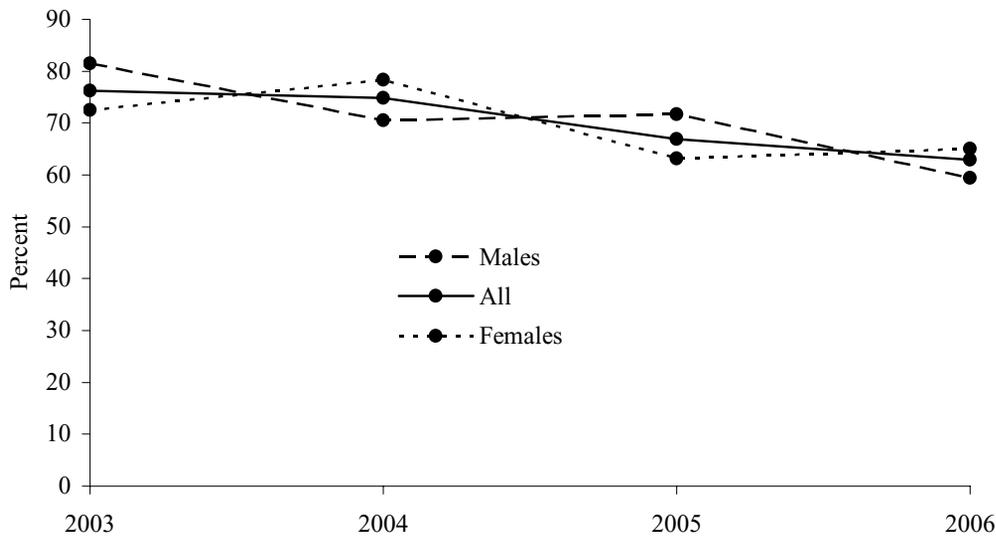


Figure 6. Capability of writing to a public official among twelfth graders.



they could write a letter to a government official about a concern decreased over time from 76% in 2003 to 63% in 2006 (Figure 6). The decline was significant among males but not among females.

In addition to the gender differences described above, Table 5 (page 8) presents findings on four measures that showed no change over time among males and females, but which did show significant overall differences between the two genders. These measures are political tolerance, social tolerance, active citizenship (attitude about how active a "good citizen" should be), and external political efficacy. Each measure indicated more-positive attitudes among females than among males.

Community service and civic development.

Focus group interviews indicated that a substantial portion of clustering time is devoted to community service projects. We therefore compared twelfth graders who did any service during the year to those who did none to determine whether they differed on any of our measures of civic development. The most striking finding is that wherever any overall difference exists, students who performed any service had higher scores than those who did none (Table 6).

The findings are mixed, by contrast, when considering differences over time in measures of civic development at different levels of service (Table 7 see page 14). Among students who performed community service, scores on political knowledge rose from 2003 to 2006, as did the proportion who contributed money to a political

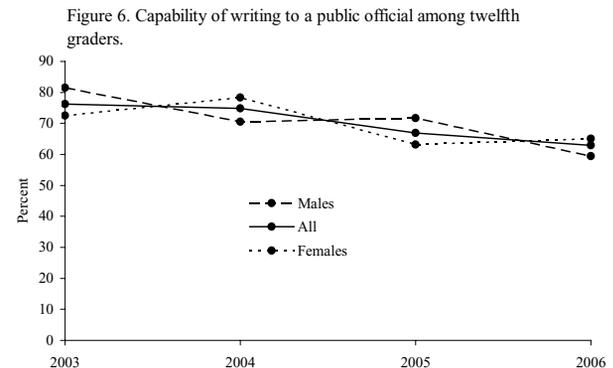


Table 6

Differences in civic measures among all twelfth graders in classes of 2003-2006, by community service

Measure	Any service		Difference (Y - N)
	Yes	No	
Voted or probably will vote in a public election (%)	86.1	70.9	15.2 ***
Written or probably will write to public officials (%)	35.4	16.3	19.1 ***
Gave or plan to give money to a political candidate or cause (%)	21.8	11.0	10.8 ***
Worked or probably will work in a political campaign (%)	13.0	6.4	6.6 **
Participated or probably will participate in a lawful demonstration (%)	31.0	18.1	12.9 ***
Boycotted or probably will boycott certain products or stores (%)	29.4	20.2	9.2 **
Could make a comment or statement at a public meeting (%)	85.1	75.5	9.6 **
Could call someone I have never met to explain a problem and ask for help (%)	70.9	62.4	8.5 *
Often discuss politics or national news with parents or family (%)	41.8	33.0	8.8 *
Political knowledge (0-5 scale)	2.68	1.91	0.8 ***
Community concern (3-12 scale)	7.02	6.18	0.8 ***
Political interest (0-6 scale)	2.95	2.58	0.4 *
Internal political efficacy (1-5 scale)	3.12	2.90	0.2 *
N	316	282	

Note. Only measures with significant results ($p < .05$) are presented.

* = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$.

candidate or cause. Their scores declined, however, on boycotting and on two measures of writing to public officials. Among students who did no service during the year, scores increased from 2003 to 2006 on boycotting, political knowledge, and community concern and showed no significant differences on the rest of the measures.

National Trends in Youth Civic Development

To determine whether the changes in civic development found among twelfth graders at Hudson High School (figures 1-6) were part of larger trends in civic development among youth generally, we examined the results for identical or similar measures generated by two nationally representative surveys conducted at approximately the same time as the Hudson research: the Monitoring the Future (MTF) and the Civic and Political Health of the Nation (CPHS) surveys.

Results from the MTF surveys (Johnston, Bachman, O'Malley, & Schulenberg, 2004, 2006), conducted by the Institute for Social Research, show that among U.S. twelfth graders between 2003 and 2005, contributing money to a political candidate or a cause rose about 31% and community concern about 4% (Table 8-- see page

15) versus 111% and 10%, respectively, at Hudson High School between 2003 and 2006 (Table 3-- see page 15). Measures of community service, external political efficacy, and confidence in ability to write to public officials showed relatively little change (1%-2%) in the MTF data, whereas in the Hudson data these measures showed changes several times larger (6%-37%). Data from the CPHS surveys of 2002 and 2006, conducted by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, (Lopez, et al, 2006 & Keeter, et al, 2002) indicate that the average level of political knowledge among 15-to-18-year-old U.S. high school students, as measured by three questions about politics and government, increased 19% over that period (Table 9),¹ whereas political knowledge scores among twelfth graders at Hudson High School increased 40% between 2003 and 2006 (Table 3-- see page 7). In brief, the significant changes in civic measures at Hudson High School were two or more times larger than changes in the corresponding measures in the national surveys.

Table 7

Differences in civic measures among twelfth graders between 2003 (T1) and 2006 (T4) by community service

Measure	Any service			No service		
	T1	T4	T4-T1	T1	T4	T4-T1
Wrote or probably will write to public officials (%)	44.3	28.6	-15.7 *	20.4	20.6	0.2
Gave or plan to give money to a political candidate or cause (%)	12.9	29.7	16.8 *	12.2	22.1	9.8
Boycotted or probably will boycott certain products or stores (%)	42.9	23.1	-19.8 **	15.3	38.2	22.9 ***
Could write a letter to a government official about a concern (%)	84.3	65.9	-18.4 **	70.4	58.8	-11.6
Political knowledge (0-5 scale)	2.37	3.11	0.7 **	1.72	2.35	0.6 *
Community concern (3-12 scale)	6.81	7.24	0.4	6.17	6.91	0.7 *
<i>N</i>	70	91		98	68	

Note. Only measures with significant results ($p < .05$) are presented.

* = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$, *** = $p < .001$.

¹ Analyses of the CPHS data were provided by Karlo Marcelo of CIRCLE.

Table 8
Civic outcomes among twelfth graders, Monitoring the Future survey

	2003	2005	Difference (%)
<u>Participate in community affairs or volunteer work a few times/year or more</u>			
%	74.7	75.9	1.7
<i>N</i>	5030	5082	
<u>Gave or probably will give money to a political candidate or cause</u>			
%	16.7	21.7	30.6
<i>N</i>	2473	2515	
<u>Wrote or probably will write to public officials</u>			
%	25.4	25.6	0.7
<i>N</i>	2479	2515	
<u>Community concern (scale of 3-12 points)</u>			
Mean	7.25	7.50	3.5
Standard deviation	2.24	2.23	
<i>N</i>	2490	2495	
<u>External political efficacy (scale of 2-10 points)</u>			
Mean	7.13	7.20	1.1
Standard deviation	1.90	1.94	
<i>N</i>	2491	2472	

Note. *N*'s are unweighted. All other results are weighted.

Table 9
Civic outcomes among high school students, age 15-18 years, Civic and Political Health of the Nation survey

	2002	2006	Difference (%)
<u>Political knowledge (scale of 0-3 points)</u>			
Mean	.854	1.012	18.5
Standard deviation	.832	.870	
<i>N</i>	372	683	

Note. *N*'s are unweighted, all other results are weighted.

DISCUSSION

This report assesses the implementation of the clustering and schoolwide governance programs at Hudson High School and takes a preliminary look at possible effects they may be having on the civic development of twelfth graders. The findings suggest that the programs have been generally implemented as planned but that changes have been made to address specific issues that have arisen. For example, deliberation has evolved away from clusterwide meetings and toward small

groups, where students feel more comfortable expressing their opinions. Also, a mechanism has been developed to hold students accountable for using their time productively during cluster meetings. Because the programs are still evolving, they cannot be considered mature at this time.

Interim findings suggest that the cluster/governance programs, though not yet fully mature, are nevertheless associated with improvements in the political knowledge, community service, and schoolwide civic engagement of twelfth graders.

Political knowledge

Findings indicate that the programs are most strongly linked to positive differences in political knowledge. The average level of political knowledge among twelfth graders was not only higher in 2006 than in 2003 but was increased among both males and females (Figure 1), as well as among students who performed community service and those who did not (Table 7). These differences represent a major step toward future political involvement. Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996), for example, concluded from their study of national political data that political knowledge is the most reliable predictor of "good citizenship." In their research on a civic voluntarism model, Verba et al. (1995) found that political information predicts voting and time-based political activities such as protesting and working in a political campaign.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Opportunity for community service was built into the design of the clustering program, and the proportion of twelfth graders doing community service in 2006 was nearly 16 percentage points higher than in 2003 (Figure 2). In addition, the proportion of students contributing money to a political candidate or cause rose significantly among twelfth graders from 2003 to 2006 (Figure 3). Clusters frequently undertook service projects to raise money for charities such as cancer research and the Muscular Dystrophy Society, and giving rose significantly among students who did community service (Table 6). In fact, one twelfth grader complained about the large number of fund raisers being conducted by clusters and suggested the school limit the number of fund raisers each year. It should be noted that contributing jumped to 26% of twelfth graders in 2006 after averaging just 13% over the preceding three years. This sharp increase may be linked to Hurricane Katrina in late 2005. (A twelfth grader noted in 2006 that her cluster had already conducted three fund raisers for victims of the hurricane.) Thus, it will be interesting to see whether contributing remains near the 2006 level in future years or drops to a lower level.

Community service is important for youth in terms of building a foundation for future political engagement (Keeter, Jenkins, Zukin, & Andolina, 2005). In fact, twelfth graders at Hudson High School who performed any community service were significantly more likely than those who did none to report that they have done or probably would do all six of the political behaviors evaluated in our study (Table 6). However, we are unable to determine whether performing community service led to increased political involvement or whether the findings in Table 6 were the result of politically active youth choosing to do service.

SCHOOLWIDE EFFECTS

One of the major rationales behind the cluster/governance intervention is the idea of including all students – not just the most active ones – in the effort. Results so far indicate progress in that direction. Two measures that showed some of the largest differences over the four years of the study – political knowledge and community service – also showed increases across different categories of students. The average level of political knowledge among female twelfth graders, for example, rose significantly from 2003 to 2006, even though females overall scored lower than males on this measure (Figure 1). Similarly, the proportion of male twelfth graders doing community service increased significantly over the four years, despite the fact that higher overall proportions of females than males performed community service (Figure 2).

Further insight into the reach of the intervention may be gained by using community service as a surrogate measure of student engagement with clusters. Because much cluster time is devoted to service projects, students who do service can be considered more active in their clusters, whereas those doing no service can be considered less active. Several measures of civic development for no-service students were significantly higher in 2006 than they were in 2003. Scores for this category of twelfth graders were increased significantly on measures of political knowledge, boycotting, and community concern in 2006, compared with 2003 (Table

7). These findings suggest an indirect effect of the intervention. Despite their low engagement in cluster and governance activities, no-service students may be benefiting from the considerable discussion and debate surrounding the intervention, as well as from the civic values and ideals displayed by more-actively involved students.

As mentioned previously, political knowledge scores rose broadly among different categories of students, including no-service students, service students, males, and females. In regard to boycotting, this activity for no-service students may represent the least costly form of civic engagement in terms of time, material resources, and social interaction. By simply not buying certain products or patronizing certain stores, these students can make a political statement that is even less costly to them, in terms of effort expended, than performing community service. Thus, for many no-service students, boycotting may represent a first, minimal step along the path of civic engagement. This interpretation is supported by the finding that measures of community concern among no-service students rose significantly over the four years of the study (although it was still lower than community concern among students who performed community service). In short, although other factors may be involved, these findings suggest that the cluster/governance intervention may be having at least a minimal, indirect effect – as evidenced, for example, by increased intention to boycott – on even the least active students.

DECLINES IN MEASURES

The declines in external political efficacy and letter-writing capability among all twelfth graders (Table 3) and in boycotting among service students (Table 7) are puzzling in light of the increases in other measures of civic development from 2003 to 2006. We do not yet know how to explain these findings. The decrease in external political efficacy scores may be related to confusion over the domain of student governance power at the high school, as well as to resentment over the accountability issue described above. After three years of participating in the cluster/governance intervention, some students in the focus groups said they were still

unsure about how much they really could change at the school through democratic deliberation and voting. For instance, students voted against having a system of accountability for how they used their cluster time but, according to the focus groups, the school committee rejected their vote. “We played by the rules and it just didn’t work. We got shot down,” a twelfth grader said.

An alternate explanation suggests that the lower external efficacy scores in 2006 may represent the nadir of the “despair-empowerment curve” experienced sometimes by students studying social and political controversies, as described by Berman (1997). According to this idea, as students gather more information about a problem and come to perceive its contentiousness and difficulty, they may develop a sense of “despair” about being able to solve the problem. However, if they persevere in developing the civic skills (e.g., dialoguing, conflict resolution) needed to reach agreement on solutions and take action, then they ultimately arrive at a sense of “empowerment.” Thus, measures of external political efficacy among twelfth graders may be higher in the future as students develop the expertise and confidence to resolve controversial issues such as the cluster accountability plan.

The drop in the proportion of students who feel capable of writing a letter to government officials about a concern may reflect increased use of the Internet, particularly among males. Youth may now be using e-mail more than written letters to contact government officials. We will explore this possibility in future research. Similarly, the decline in boycotting among service students may reflect a shift toward a more active form of civic engagement and away from a more passive type. Because boycotting requires so little effort and no social interaction, students who are highly concerned about the community may forego boycotting and opt, instead, for active, direct service to people and organizations.

NATIONAL TRENDS

The question arises as to whether the changes in civic development observed at Hudson High School are specific to that school or are part

of broader trends in youth civic development nationwide. Results from nationally representative surveys show increases of 31% in giving money to political candidates or causes, 19% in political knowledge, 4% in community concern, and less than 2% in community service, external political efficacy, and writing to public officials among high school students (Tables 8 and 9) over roughly the same time period as the Hudson study. The fact that the difference scores (as measured by percent change in scores between 2003 and 2006) for the comparative measures among Hudson twelfth graders (Table 3) were two or more times greater than the national scores suggests that the changes observed in Hudson represent something more than national trends. However, because some of the national civic measures were slightly different than the ones used in the Hudson surveys and because the timing of the national surveys did not exactly coincide with those in Hudson, the influence of national trends on the Hudson results cannot be entirely ruled out.

CONCLUSION

Changing the culture of a school is not a simple task. It may begin with the intentional design of administrators; but to be effective, it requires the cooperative participation of teachers, students, and parents. Results indicate that the initial steps in implementing the clustering and schoolwide governance intervention are associated with some success, in that successive classes of twelfth graders have shown positive changes on measures of civic knowledge and service, as well as some indication of widespread effects. These results seem to warrant optimism that this effort might develop further to include a broader segment of the students and become a tradition that gives this high school and its students an inspiring introduction to participatory democracy and fosters a collective civic identity.

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APPENDIX

Below is the original language of the questionnaire items used in our 19 measures of youth civic development. We used Pearson's chi-square statistic to compare response frequencies and the t test for independent samples to assess differences between mean scores.

- 1-6. Have you ever done, or do you plan to do, the following things?
1. Vote in a public election
 2. Write to public officials
 3. Give money to a political candidate or cause
 4. Work in a political campaign
 5. Participate in a lawful demonstration
 6. Boycott certain products or stores
- 1=Have done/Probably will, 2=Probably won't/Don't know
7. A community service variable was created from answers to the two items below, with the following values: 1=Any service (yes to either item), 2=No service (no to both items).
- This past school year (including the previous summer) did you perform any community service as part of your school's service-learning program? (Yes/No)
 - This past school year (including the previous summer) did you perform any voluntary community service (service NOT done as part of a school course)? (Yes/No)
8. A political knowledge variable with a summed scale of 0-5 points was created from five questions about U.S. politics and government. The questions are not presented here because the evaluation is still in progress. Cronbach's alphas for this measure in 2003-2006 were .70, .82, .79, and .77, respectively.
9. Imagine you went to a community meeting and people were making comments and statements. Do you think you could make a comment or a statement at a public meeting? 1=Yes/Depends on meeting, issue, etc.; 2=No/Would never want to make a statement
10. Suppose you wanted to write a letter to someone in the government about something that concerned you. Do you feel that you could write a letter that clearly gives your opinion? 1=Yes, 2=No
11. Suppose there was some issue you felt needed action in our community. Do you think you would be able to call someone on the phone you had never met before to explain the problem and ask for help? 1=Yes, would be comfortable/Yes, but would be uncomfortable; 2=No, would not want to make a statement/Don't know
12. How often do you usually talk about politics or national issues with your parents or family? 1=Seldom (Hardly ever/At least once a month), 2=Often (At least once a week/Almost every day).
13. A political tolerance variable with a summed scale of 0-2 points was created from the following two items. Correlation coefficients for these items in 2003-2006 were .23, .35, .14, and .19, respectively.
- Suppose a book that most people disapproved of was written, for example, saying that it was all right to take illegal drugs. Should a book like that be kept out of a public library? 0=No, 1=Yes (reverse coded to 0=Yes, 1=No).
 - If a person wanted to make a speech in your community against churches and religion, should he or she be allowed to speak? 0=No, 1=Yes.
14. A social tolerance variable with a summed scale of 3-12 points was created from the three items below. Cronbach's alphas for this measure in 2003-2006 were .81, .85, .91, and .86, respectively.
- How would you feel about ...
- Having close personal friends of another race?
 - Having a family of a different race (but same level of education and income) move next door to you?
 - Having your (future) children go to schools where most of the children are of other races?

1=Not acceptable, 2=Somewhat acceptable, 3=Acceptable, 4=desirable

15. A community concern variable with a summed scale of 3-12 points was created from the three items below. Cronbach's alphas for this measure in 2003-2006 were .72, .78, .70, and .76, respectively.

How important is each of the following to you in your life?

- Making a contribution to society
- Being a leader in my community
- Working to correct social and economic inequalities

1=Not important, 2=Somewhat important, 3=Quite important, 4=Extremely important

16. A political interest variable with a summed scale of 0-6 points was created from the following two items. Correlation coefficients for these items in 2003-2006 were .39, .45, .41, and .38, respectively.

How often do you ...

- Read about the national news in a newspaper or newsmagazine like Newsweek, Time, or U.S. News and World Report?
- Watch the national news on television or listen to the national news on the radio?

0=Hardly ever, 1=At least once a month, 2=At least once a week, 3=Almost every day

17. Internal political efficacy (scale of 1-5 points): How much do you agree or disagree with each statement below? I feel that I can do very little to change the way the world is today. (reverse coded from the following responses) 1=Disagree, 2=Mostly disagree, 3=Neither, 4=Mostly agree, 5=Agree

18. An external political efficacy variable with a summed scale of 2-10 points was created from the following two items. Correlation coefficients for these items in 2003-2006 were .34, .55, .53, and .61, respectively.

How much do you agree or disagree with each statement below?

- The way people vote has a major impact on how things are run in this country.
- People who get together in citizen action groups to influence government policies can have a real effect.

1=Disagree, 2=Mostly disagree, 3=Neither, 4=Mostly agree, 5=Agree

19. An active citizenship variable with a summed scale of 2-10 points was created from the following two items. Correlation coefficients for these items in 2003-2006 were .20, .28, .22, and .28, respectively.

How much do you agree or disagree with each statement below?

- I feel good citizens should go along with whatever the government does even if they disagree with it. (reverse coded from responses below)
- I feel good citizens try to change the government policies they disagree with.

1=Disagree, 2=Mostly disagree, 3=Neither, 4=Mostly agree, 5=Agree

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